

Effectiveness of Peer-mediated Play Intervention for Reducing Anxiety in Aged 4 to 6 Years Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Stella Wai-Wan Choy
Conor Mc Guckin
Miriam Twomey

Trinity College Dublin

ABSTRACT

This research evaluated the effectiveness of peer-mediated block play for reducing anxiety for aged 4 to 6 years children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Specifically, the research sought to identify the risk factors of anxiety disorders and extra challenges of concurrent anxiety and ASD in children. And to explore how an overarching program involving parents training and peer-mediated approaches using block-play and LEGO®-Based Therapy might evidence a reduction in risk factors (i.e., prevention) and challenges (i.e., intervention) of anxiety in children with ASD. The methodology was designed “a priori” as a mixed methodology study, encompassing experimentation and evaluation (i.e., standardised assessments, interviews, observations, questionnaires, images). Children are facilitated as co-participants, thus simultaneously providing an operational expression of the philosophy of “voice” (e.g., UN Article 12) for children in decisions of importance to them, within a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. All sessions will be recorded for the Statistical Analysis of Change. Treatment fidelity will be included to measure change. This research makes a valuable contribution to knowledge in the area of early intervention and ASD studies. It expands the scope of Universal Design by applying a UDL framework to early intervention. It also proposes an overarching framework to place children in their bio-ecological context and incorporating children’s voices and neurodiversity, contributing to Hong Kong, Ireland and beyond.

Keywords: anxiety; early intervention; Autism Spectrum Disorder; inclusion; LEGO®-Based Therapy